Amendments to the Specification:

Please **replace** paragraph [0035] with the following amended paragraph:

[0035]   According to one embodiment of the present invention, a method is provided of estimating a real-time physical link error rate (e.g., a bit error rate) of a link between network elements within a communications network. The estimated real-time physical link error rate is then compared to one or more threshold values (e.g., a "physical link error alarm set threshold" and a "physical link error alarm clear threshold"), and an alarm signal is set or cleared in response thereto. A command line interface (CLI) is provided through which one or more parameters are provided. According to one embodiment, a user provides data specifying a link error alarm set threshold and a hysteresis factor using the described command line interface. In one embodiment, for example, a user enters positive integers corresponding to the hysteresis factor and the exponent of a link error alarm set threshold (e.g., '9' for a link error alarm set threshold of 10^{-9}). According to one embodiment of the present invention, a link error alarm set threshold of between 10^{-6} and 10^{-11} may be specified in this manner. In alternative embodiments of the present invention, data specifying parameters other than the link error alarm set threshold and hysteresis factor ~~(e.g., link error alarm set threshold)~~ may be provided such that remaining required parameter(s) may be determined.